

# Should a custom harvester be harvesting your forage?

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2009 Dairy Forage Toolbox Seminar

# Introduction



Digmans



Wepners

**Which one is right? - Both!**



## Why the Wepners work with a custom harvester:

- ① Focus on core expertise/interests
  - Milking, feeding, breeding & animal health
- ② Limited labor resources



## Why the Digmans harvest their own forage:

- 1 Not willing to give up control
- 2 Good source of intermittent labor
- 3 Additional farm enterprise

# Advantages of utilizing a custom harvester



## Advantages of a custom harvester

- Consistent forage - high level of capitalization
- Seasonal labor - labor needs don't interfere with dairy operations
- Latest technology - kernel processing, inoculant application, yield mapping

# Advantages of harvesting your own forage



## Advantages of going it alone

- In control of harvest
- Utilize on-farm labor
- Love the work

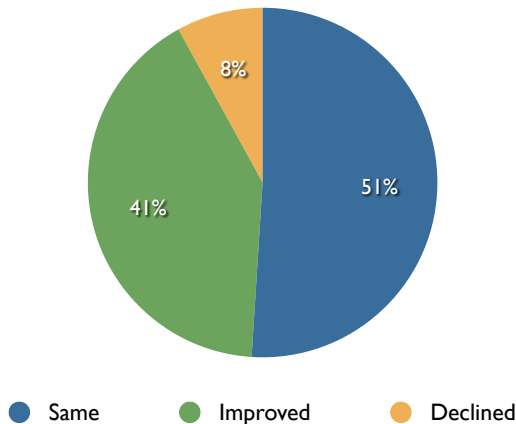
# Hay and Forage Grower Survey

## Hay & Forage Grower Survey:

- ① E-mail survey - 80 responses
- ② Overall satisfaction - 8/10
  - Dependability
  - Communication
  - Feed quality
  - Skill of employees

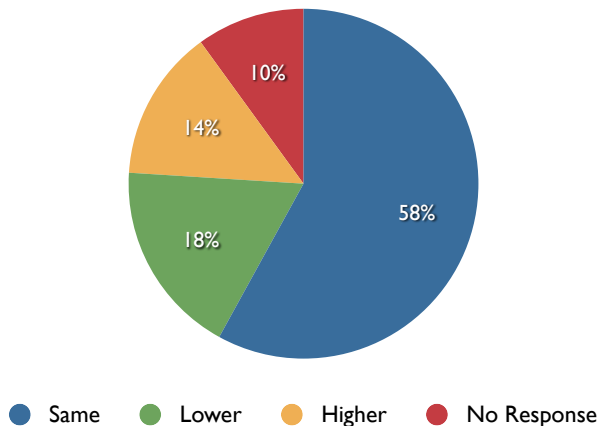


## Feed Quality



Source: Hay and Forage Grower, 2002

## Feed Cost



Source: Hay and Forage Grower, 2002


## First Step - Know your production costs

- ① Keep good records (time, fuel & lubrication, repair & maintenance)
- ② Work with a financial planner
- ③ Available resources:
  - **Your county agriculture agent:**  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/>
  - **UWEX machinery cost publication:**  
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/A3510.pdf>
  - **UWM spreadsheet:**  
<http://www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/wlazarus/tools.html>
  - **UWM financial database:**  
<http://www.finbin.umn.edu/>

# Getting started with a custom harvester

## USDA-NASS Custom Rate Guide:


- Average rates and ranges
- Rate data organized by:
  - 9 districts
  - 3 regions
- Good starting point - not official estimates



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

**Custom Rate Guide 2007**

Cooperating with Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection  
Wisconsin Field Office: P.O. Box 8534, Madison, WI 53708-8534  
(608) 224-4840 (608) 224-4855 FAX: www.nass.usda.gov/eat S-eal: nass-w@nass.usda.gov



**General:**

As part of an on-going cooperative arrangement with the agriculture industry, the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service conducts a Custom Rate Survey every three years. This 2007 summary is a result of a mail survey which collected rates paid by farmers for custom work performed in 2007. The figures are based on reports by farmers who hire custom work, custom operators and farmers who perform work, and machinery dealers who rent out equipment. Over 750 reports were completed.

Most of the rates in this release include the cost of hiring the machine with fuel and operator, but exclude the cost of any materials. No attempt was made to distinguish between rates charged by custom operators who perform their operations as their main source of income, and those who occasionally do custom work as a sideline. Rates charged by custom operators and equipment dealers were more likely to be on the higher end of the range. This summary makes no effort to evaluate fairness of rates being charged.

**Data:**

Included in this report are " statewide average rates and typical ranges for these averages. The rates and ranges in this release are based on actual reported data and should not be viewed as official estimates. The ranges provided for each custom operation encompass at least 90 percent of the reported values. Rates are typically influenced by the availability of equipment, fuel expenses, soil conditions, topography, field shape and size, traditional practices in an area, and type, size and age of equipment. Reports were edited to remove items for which the respondent's figures were widely outside the range of other respondent's replies. Certain items may have appeared on the questionnaire but were not summarized due to an insufficient number of responses.

Price changes for machinery, fuel, and labor should be taken into account when using this 2007 data for subsequent years.

**District and Regional Data:**

Every effort was made to publish summarized items beyond Statewide averages. Depending upon the number of reports received, some data was published on either a District or Region level. The District breakdown follows the typical Agricultural Statistics Districts used routinely by the Wisconsin Field Office (see figure 1). The Region breakdown combines Agricultural Statistics Districts based on similar topography and farming practices (see figure 2). Please refer to these figures to determine which District or Region your operation falls in.



Figure 1:  
AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS  
DISTRICTS



Figure 2:  
WISCONSIN  
REGIONS

# Getting started with a custom harvester

## Getting to know a custom harvester:

- Ask for references
- Be prepared to give references
- Share cropping plans, field layouts (obstructions)



# Maintain a mutually beneficial partnership

## Building a relationship with a custom harvester:

- Have written contact
- Stick with your harvester
  - Knows fields
  - Season scheduling
- Pay on-time
- Communicate
  - Crop conditions
  - Change in acreage
  - Complaints



# Maintain a mutually beneficial partnership



## Be careful not to be penny-wise and pound-foolish!

- 1 Custom harvesters don't stop for milking
- 2 Packing/bagging capacity must match harvester

# Forage Resources

Harvesting and Storage

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## Harvesting and Storage

[Silage Harvesting & Equipment](#) | [Silage Storage & Equipment](#) | [Bale Harvesting & Equipment](#) | [Custom Harvesting](#) | [Silage Storage](#) | [Hay and Straw Storage](#) | [Crop Residue](#) | [Harvest and Storage Equipment](#) | [Forage Systems](#) | [Index](#)

### Silage Harvesting & Equipment

**Forage Harvester Adjustments**  
by M&D Digman, UW Extension Ag Engineer, Wisconsin Crop Manager, September, 2009

**Minimizing Wheel Traffic Damage to Alfalfa**   
A "Focus on Forage" fact sheet edited by Dan Undersander, UW Extension Forage Agronomist

**Adjusting the Conditioning System on a Mower-Conditioner**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Ag Engineer

**Forage Width and Mower Conditioning**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, Wisconsin Crop Manager, May, 2008

**Drying Forage for Hay and Haylage**  
by Dan Undersander, UW Extension Forage Agronomist, Wisconsin Crop Manager, April, 2008

**Adjusting the Forage Harvester for Corn Silage Particle Size**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Ag Engineer

**Rolls and Micros**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Ag Engineer

**Soil Connection in Alfalfa Fields**   
A MS PowerPoint presentation by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Ag Engineer

**Corn Processor Adjustment for Corn Stalks**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Ag Engineer

**Estimating the Weight of Forage in a Forage Wagon**  
by Dan Undersander, former UW Extension Ag Eng., Stanislav Stul, A "Focus on Forage" fact sheet

**Harvest and Storage of High-Quality Corn Stalks for Dairy Cows**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Dairy Specialist

**Corn Stalk Harvest Management**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Dairy Specialist, Dr. Jim Lewis, UW Extension Agronomist and Dr. Kevin Steiner, UW Ag Engineer

**Machine Settings and Adjustments for Minimized Field Losses**   
by Dr. Ron Schuler, UW Extension Ag Engineer

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### Bale Harvesting & Equipment

**How to Fix Bale Storage Losses: how different options stack up**   
by Craig Deak, Dunbar County Agricultural Agent, A "Focus on Forage" Fact Sheet

<http://www.uwex.edu/crops/forage/storage.htm>

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For more information visit the Team Forage website:  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/uwforage.htm>